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(54) Title: COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEM FOR AIRCRAFT

(57) Abstract

A system for permitting passengers on board an aircraft to send and receive electronic data is described. The components of the system on board the aircraft include a server (20) having a plurality of nodes (30) to which computer terminals (40a, 40b and 40c) are attached, as desired. The computer terminals are laptop or palm-top personal computers belonging to the various passengers on board. The server communicates with a wide variety of different terminals running different operating systems. Each computer terminal is connected to the server (20) via an aircraft network (50). Server (20) has mass storage which contains a database of WWW pages which can be browsed by passengers using terminals (40a, 40b and 40c). Server (20) provides a domain name server (DNS) that masquerades as the passenger's usual DNS. Server (20) then links the passenger to the appropriate locally stored WWW page. Server (20) also contains storage for Email messages. Connected to server (20) is one or more radios (60). This permits data to be transferred to base station (90) using communications network (80). A virtual private network (VPN) (150) connects station (90) to communications service provider networks (80), web content processor (190), and via links (180) to the Internet (160). Points of Presence (POP) (170) provide Internet access and Email service to subscribers of the service while not on the aircraft. POPs (170) can also be used by communications service provider networks and web content processors as an alternate means to connect to VPN (150).

